

Italian Immigrants to Collinsville

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Many immigrants from all over the world came to America in search of a better life.

Many Italian immigrants came to Collinsville for the same reason. They came to escape the turmoil that followed the revolution that was taking place in Europe in the 1840s.

Collinsville was close to St. Louis and the Pennsylvania Railroad later ran through the area. The area was rich in clay used for making bricks. It was also rich in coal that was close to the surface and could be easily mined.

The Lumaghi family was very involved in starting the mining industry in Collinsville. Dr. Octavius Lumaghi was born in Milan and educated at the University of Pavia. In 1845, he moved to St. Louis and opened a medical practice. In 1854, he decided to build a summer house in Collinsville. The home was located on a hill just north of Lebanon Road where Glidden Park is today. Octavius built the Collinsville Zinc Works and four different coal mines. He encouraged other Italians to come to Collinsville to work in the mines. Italian emigrants were leaving hard times and revolutions in the old country and were heading to Collinsville because the coal mines were offering work. Lumaghi probably liked this because he did not have to pay for passage or recruit men to work for him. Italian miners from North and South Dakota and Colorado also came to Collinsville to work in Lumaghi's mines. This is why there is a large Italian population in Collinsville today.

Octavius's son Louis Lumaghi, also played an important role in the development of Collinsville. He was a pitcher for the Collinsville Reds baseball team. He was also a

prime mover in organizing the Commercial Club, which is now the Chamber of Commerce. Louis also served as the eighth mayor of Collinsville for four years.

An influential Italian immigrant of personal interest to me was Dino Fratiglioni. He was my great-grandfather by marriage. He was born to Eusebio and Julia Fratiglioni in Italy on February 11, 1910, and traveled to Illinois with his mother to join his father when he was a young boy. His father worked in the coal mines and later, he too began to work there. Dino served as the president of the Progressive Mine Workers of America and later also served as the Secretary/Treasurer. The Progressive Mine Workers of America Union helped poor families and they also helped improve the working conditions in the mines. In World War II, the Union also gave to the war effort by buying Liberty Bonds and donating to the Red Cross.

In addition to working in the mines, early Italian immigrants in Collinsville had to have some fun. They participated in log rolling, house raising, harvests, corn husking, wedding celebrations, and horse racing. The Italian Fest is a celebration of the heritage of Italian immigrants in Collinsville which is still going on to this day.

As Collinsville grew so did the number of Italian immigrants in the area. The Italian influence affected many aspects of life including religion, language, architecture, business, civic affairs, and social events. In 1885, the city hall was built. It was designed in the Italian style. The Collinsville Miners Institute was built in 1918 entirely by miners' wages. The Miners Institute was a place that held many civic and cultural events. [From "Lumaghi Coal Company of Collinsville," *Edwardsville Intelligencer*, (No date on article); "Lumaghi Descendants Returning Here for Fest," *Collinsville Herald*, Sept. 17, 1992; "Lumaghi-Why This Name Is Important to the Italian Fest,"

Collinsville Herald, Sept. 17, 1992; Lucille M. Stehman, *Collinsville-A Pictorial History*,
and Brett Turner, "The Lumaghi Family's Impact on Collinsville," *Illinois History-A*
Magazine for Young People.]